



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
Northern District of Texas

1100 Commerce Street, 3rd Floor
Dallas, Texas 75242-1699

Telephone (214)659-8600
Fax (214)767-0978

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
CONTACT: 214/659-8707
www.usdoj.gov/usao/txn

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**DALLAS AREA COCAINE TRAFFICKER
SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT**

Defendant a Leader in Cocaine Distribution Conspiracy

United States Attorney Richard B. Roper announced that Kaufman County, Texas, resident, Frederico Gonzalez, a/k/a "Viejon" was sentenced today by the Honorable A. Joe Fish, United States District Judge, to life imprisonment, without parole, following his guilty plea in April to conspiracy to distribute cocaine. Gonzalez, age 42, was also ordered to forfeit his ranch in Kaufman County, Texas. In October 2003, the government seized nearly \$600,000 in currency, numerous firearms, including assault weapons, and 15 kilograms of cocaine from Gonzalez's homes, shortly after his arrest on charges outlined in a federal indictment.

At today's sentencing hearing, Judge Fish found that Gonzalez was a leader in the cocaine distribution conspiracy. Gonzalez distributed approximately 300 kilograms of cocaine, with a \$20 million - \$30 million street value from April - October 2003. Judge Fish also found that Gonzalez obstructed justice in the case by threatening witnesses and their family members and that he committed perjury during the April 2004 trial of co-defendant Mario Ortiz.

Gary G. Olenkiewicz, Special Agent in Charge of the Dallas Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration commented, "DEA lauds the sentence by the Federal District Court against Mr. Frederico Gonzalez. This life sentence sends a message to other drug traffickers that the drug law enforcement community has and will continue to build the strongest possible criminal cases. These investigations, combined with thorough and effective prosecution by the U.S. Attorney's Office, positively impact our community and further demonstrate DEA's commitment to that process."

Gonzales worked directly with a source in Mexico and coordinated the shipment of cocaine in 20-25 kilogram quantity loads from Mexico to the Dallas area. On occasion there would be three cars in a single day transporting 75 kilograms of cocaine. Once Gonzalez took possession of the cocaine, he distributed it, in kilogram quantities, to his various customers in and around the Dallas area who would in turn distribute the cocaine in locations such as Monroe, Louisiana, St. Louis, Missouri, and various locations in Tennessee. Two of those customers were Ricardo Eusebio Lira, a/k/a "Gordo" and his brother, Nicolas Humberto Lira, a/k/a "Nico," who primarily distributed the cocaine in the Pleasant Grove area of southeast Dallas. These defendants have pled guilty to their role in the conspiracy and are currently serving lengthy federal prison sentences.

After Gonzalez paid for the cocaine, the drug proceeds, which were packaged in heat-sealed bags and transported in a way to conceal the identity of the money as drug proceeds as well as the true ownership of the funds, would be delivered to South Texas or Mexico.

U.S. Attorney Roper said, "I applaud Judge Fish's sentence. Gonzalez was well-connected, well armed, and skilled in counter-surveillance measures. Law enforcement brought his operation to a screeching halt and today's sentence ensures he is out of business for good." Roper continued, "Here is another success story in the North Texas Project Safe Neighborhoods' program."

U.S. Attorney Roper praised the exceptionally coordinated efforts of local, state and federal law enforcement, including various elements within the Dallas Police Department that provided significant contributions throughout the course of this investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Garland Police Department and the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation Division.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Chad Meacham and Rick Calvert.